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PROHIBITION DENOUNCED BY HARVARD SCIENTIST

By Prof. Hugo Munsterberg of Harvard.

For a clear, scientific and logical
statement on the evils that followed
in the path of prohibition, the reader
of the Bulletin, whether prohibi-
tionist or anti-prohibitionist, is ad-
vised to turn to the article by Hugo
Munsterberg, professor of Psychology
at Harvard University. Professor
Munsterberg is a scientist of interna-
tional reputation and in the course of
his experiments as professor of psy-
chology at Harvard, has given particu-
lar attention to the effects of intem-
perance. Professor Munsterberg's
comments on the attacks of the prohi-
bitionists because he takes issue with
their views, is of particular, heart
bearing.

We all agree that alcoholic intem-
perance is one of the greatest
sources of human misery, being the
direct cause of a large part of
crime, of poverty, of illness, of in-
sanity, of earth death, and in the
next generation, of idleness and de-
pravity. We all agree further that
all alcoholic beverages are danger-
ous for children and psychopaths;
and we agree that to fight against
such evils is the duty of every con-
scientious reformer. Our possible
disagreement appears thus only when
we consider the means by which
these evils can be removed in the
highest possible degree without in-
troducing other evils equally calam-
itous. After studying this problem
for more than twenty years and af-
ter repeating frequently in the psy-
chological laboratory all the signifi-
cant experiments, and after curing
scores of drunkards by psychothera-
peutic means and thus being near
to the question all the time, I am
fully convinced that under the pre-
sent conditions of American life the
only wise way of reform is by work-
ing toward temperance and not to-
ward prohibition. It must be a
campaign of education towards a
moderate use of light alcoholic be-
verages.

Since I uttered this opinion pub-
licly a few months ago in a popular
magazine, a whole literature of so-
called replies has gone up. There
was no lack of vehemence and an
abundance of misstatements, and
even the excitement of the presiden-
tial campaign would not be sufficient
to excuse the denunciations and fal-
sifications which my friends the Prohi-
bitionists, indulged in; but I looked
in vain for a single argument which
could change in the least my opin-
ion. Of course, I do not deny that
the other side has a much simplified
remedy. To exclude all alcohol from
this country by prohibition laws
seems to get rid of the evil with one
stroke; it needs indeed much less ef-
fort than a true education towards
temperance. But the Prohibition
movement is just like the free silver
movements in economics, or like so-
cialism in politics, or like spiritual-
ism in religion, or like Christian
Science in medicine, or like Prag-
matism in philosophy. They all con-
tain a little core of truth, but their
truth is old and they become new
fashioned movements only by new
sensational formulations which ap-
peal to the unthinking crowd. But
just this always secures at first an
immediate cheap victory; a super-
ficiality of thinking prevails in the
world and can never resist the en-
thusiasm of fanatics. I have hardly
any doubt that this Prohibition
movement, too, will at first over-
whelm, by its very superficiality, the
sober efforts for education and re-
form in this country, just as the
vaudeville and the opera have over-
whelmed the serious drama, as the
cheap magazine has demolished the
book store, as the yellow press has
captured the masses, and as in a
hundred other forms the appeal to
superficial judgment has been suc-
cessful. Then of course the reac-
tion comes in time, and the cry for
prohibition will just as swiftly dis-
appear as the cry for free silver.

Our Habitual Disrespect for Law.
Let us not forget that we want to
make laws for a nation whose habit-
ual disrespect for the written sta-
tutes has proved in the last years to
be the chief source of its troubles,
and let us further not forget that
we want to legislate against a psy-
chological desire which belongs to a
majority of men. The absence of
this desire in women or in a large
number of men whose nervous sys-
tem is differently organized can eas-
ily mislead. I personally, for in-
stance, brought up in a temperance
household, have had my life long a
physiological dislike not only for
strong drinks but also for beer. But
in planning for the millions I should
feel reckless and irresponsible if I
simply generalized my own chance
constitution.

That kind of abstinence legisla-
tion which prevails in certain parts
of the country and is evidently near
in others is surely not for the com-
mon good. That it destroys in-
dustries and makes hundreds of
thousands of breadless, and that it
deprives millions of a harmless, joy-
ful feeling is still the smallest harm
which it produces. But far more im-
portant is the disrespect for law
which it creates. Prohibition puts a

premium on the systematic viola-
tion of law and produces a form of
corruption which is still worse than the
corruption which irradiates from the
licensed saloon. Further, it re-en-
forces drinking in its most miserable
and dangerous form. The moderate
drinker is cut off, while the immod-
erate drinker is created. It abolishes
light wine and beer; and opens wide
the way for the worst kind of
whisky. It eliminates every sound
supervision and makes minors and
inebriates the favorite customers. A
clean surface appearance is bought
at the expense of inner moral and
mental destruction. Worst of all,
the masses who feel the instinctive
need of an anaesthetic quickly find
substitutes. I speak as a psychol-
ogist whose experiences cover the
whole country, if I say that the
spreading of cocaineism and morphin-
ism, of sexual perversions and rain-
ous habits among the abstainers is
alarming. But even on the surface,
any one can see to what degree of
dullness on the one side and of vul-
garity on the other side the masses
are led if the means of physiological
relief are cut off from a strong hard-
working population. To fight in-
temperance by prohibition means to
substitute one evil for another; a
reform by slow education towards a
moderate use of light wine or beer,
is the only way to permanent suc-
cess in this country, as long as Amer-
icans remain Americans.

The Contentions of Dr. Williams.
Of course there are not a few who
are convinced that alcohol is ruinous
for every one, even in moderate
quantities; and it has become the
fashion to support this belief by the
results of scientific investigations.
My whole life belongs to science, but
after most careful study I am con-
vinced that there exists no scientifi-
cally safe fact which demonstrates
evil effects if a temperance use of
alcohol by normal adult men. Every
claim on the one side has been dis-
proved by just as important experi-
ments on the other side. Even on
physiological ground, everything is
uncertain. Dr. Williams, of New
York, tells us that alcohol is never
a food; and Dr. Dana, of New York,
the president of the New York Acad-
emy of Medicine, tells us that al-
cohol is always a food. Dr. Williams
writes that alcohol always lessens
the power for work; and Dr. Dana
writes that, as proved by recent ex-
periments, alcohol has no effect, but
way of the other, on the capacity
to work if given in moderate daily
doses. Dr. Williams writes that al-
cohol is the greatest evil of society;
and Dr. Dana writes that the im-
mediate removal of alcohol from so-
cial life would lead to social and
racial decadence.

But I, a psychologist, am natu-
rally more interested in the mental
side. Dr. Williams and so many
others dogmatically assure us, for
instance, that alcohol cuts off the
power of mental production. But is
really a psychological laboratory
necessary to demonstrate the hollowness
of such general statements? I know
of scores of men who never
produce better than after a moderate
use of alcohol, and it is well
known that this is true in excep-
tional cases even where immoderate
use is indulged in. I had to hypo-
thesize only recently a well known New
York author whose secret trouble is
that he has never written a page of
his brilliant books but after intem-
perate use of whisky. Dr. Williams
assures us that every moderate use
of wine and beer reduces the powers
of intellectual activity; and again
the psychological experiment is said
to have proved that. I must think
there instinctively of the man who
has given to the world the methods
of psychological experiment, Professor
Wundt, of Leipzig, the greatest
living psychologist. He is seventy-
six years old today; has written about
forty volumes, which are acknowl-
edged the world over as the deepest
contributions to psychological
thought; has written this year an
epoch-making book; and yet has
taken for sixty years, twice a day,
beer and wine with every meal. I at-
tended last summer a number of in-
ternational congresses and saw there
at many banquets the leaders of
thought from all nations. I watched
the situation carefully, but did
not discover any abstainers among
the sharp and great thinkers of any
nation.

To demonstrate that the abstain-
ers enjoy clearer methods of think-
ing than such drinking scholars
would be indeed an interesting ex-
periment, but from the prohibitionist
literature I cannot gain the impres-
sion that clearness of thinking is
their particular strength. Typical
of their unclearness is the way in
which they draw arbitrary conse-
quences from the real experiments.
It is for instance, quite right to claim
that alcohol makes our mental as-
sociations slower, but they interpret
it as if that means a destructive
crippling of our mental life. They
do not even ask themselves whether
or not this retardation of association

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of ideas may not perhaps be a most
helpful and useful relaxation of cer-
tain brain centers. With the same
logic they might demonstrate to us
that sleep is a most ruinous inven-
tion of nature, as it paralyzes our
brain centers still more; and they
have not the slightest understand-
ing for the fundamental fact that
such an inhibition in certain parts
of the brain belongs to every single
act of attention. They do not take
the trouble to ask whether or not
our associations are also changed
through the digestion of a dry meal.

With such careless misinterpretations
of isolated experiments, I could
demonstrate to you most easily that
every hour of physical exercise is
ruinous for the higher mental life;
or that the fatigue from the hearing
of one hour's lecture makes mental
cripples out of all of us. The fear
of those who want to cut off a bottle
of light beer with the evening meal
from the home table of a hardwork-
ing laborer on account of the
psychological experiments is com-
parable only with the fear of those
who wish that every man might live
isolated in the middle of the ocean
because in every other place the
laboratory can demonstrate num-
bers, less microbes and bacteria.

The only reasonable argument
against moderate drinking of nor-
mal adult men is a fear that they
may transcend the wise limits. Yes,
I confess the only word which made
an impression on me in the pam-
phlets written against my essay was
one contained in a Chicago pam-
phlet, which said that we must con-
sider Americans are reckless and
carry everything to excess. But can
that really be the attitude of a civ-
ilized nation? To legislate as if the
citizens are irresponsible children, in-
capable of moderation, would mean
a degradation of the whole country.
With the same right we might pro-
hibit every sport because it becomes
ruinous for the organism if carried
to an excess. Surely the Americans
are reckless and excessive; otherwise
we should not have ten times more
railroad accidents than Europe, and
gambling and an absurd chase for
money all over the land. But the
only sound consequence would be
that every reformer has the duty to
educate towards moderation in ev-
ery field. To learn to be moderate
involves the development of will
power, which is beneficial in every
walk of life. Only towards men
who have no trust in their own will pre-
fer to be removed from every tempta-
tion. I remember well a man who
was president of an abstinence so-
ciety for many years, and then used
once for medicinal purposes a glass
of brandy, and as he had not been
trained in any moderation, the one
glass stirred up a craving for more
until he was lying in the gutter; and
when he was brought to me to be
hypnotized he confessed that he had
no will to abstain from overindul-
gence. The campaign for temperance
as against prohibition is a campaign
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enemies of intemperance were to

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lays reform until it may be too late.

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